

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Thematic Report

**Recommendations from the Millennium
Ecosystem Assessment workshop**

February 2006

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Recommendations from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Workshop held 3 February 2006, London

Evaluating the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: messages, knowledge gaps and policy implications

The draft recommendations presented below are a synthesis of the discussion at the workshop. They do not necessarily represent a consensus view of the participants or the positions of the organisations represented at the meeting. Nor are they necessarily comprehensive with respect to the objectives of the meeting. There is no commitment on behalf of the participants or organisations represented to implement the recommendations. However the authors hope that the paper will be of value in informing follow-up actions.

Summary of recommendations

Policy Applications

1. Conduct UK level study of implications of the MA findings for use in UK's response.
2. Consider how UK Government could structure policy and research response to biodiversity loss around key drivers described in the MA.
3. Undertake an audit of the responses the UK is currently using.
4. Develop a framework to guide future responses by the UK, and against which these responses can be measured.
5. Assess the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy for consistency with the MA.
6. Include the MA framework in Strategic Environmental Assessment processes.
7. Integrate the findings of the MA with the review of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the 7th Framework Programme, the 6th Environmental Action Programme and the review of the UK BAP.
8. The MA presents a case for considering natural assets as a contribution to growth. A debate is needed on how this concept can be reconciled with the current view of income as a measure of growth.
9. Global public goods need to be appropriately valued, (1.) in non-environmental multilateral agreements and global financing mechanisms, and (2.) positive and negative incentives need to be addressed.

Communications, knowledge transfer and capacity building

1. Create champions within institutions to take forward the findings of the MA.
2. Ensure the MA is available to all Government departments preparing horizon scanning exercises and policies.
3. Communicating the message of biodiversity and ecosystem services remains critical, in particular to other sectors (e.g. trade) where the decisions being made have major impacts on biodiversity.
4. Convey key messages from the MA to the Department for Education and Skills to feed into development of the UK science curriculum.
5. Inform consumers so they can make sustainable choices.

6. Knowledge and understanding about biodiversity and ecosystem services needs to be transferred to local stakeholders, at various levels.
7. Explore the promotion of the MA's message via various communications opportunities, i.e. television documentaries, production of books, translate studies into popular literature and explore links to BBC programmes on climate change.
8. Develop partnerships with other countries to take forward the messages of the MA outside the UK. Seek to provide a copy of MA studies in British Council libraries.
9. Policy communication (and related) tools require development in order to supplement indicator information.
10. Prepare a special report to Global Environmental Change Committee to highlight the importance of the MA.
11. Capacity needs to be built within the UK and overseas in the techniques and skills required to undertake ecosystem services- based work in the MA context. Programmes such as the Darwin Initiative are exemplars of the ways in which this might be achieved.
12. Need for capacity building and sharing experience, relating to assessment of status and trends, measurement of ecosystem services, modelling, scenarios and communication of results – including both scientific and policy communities.
13. The pressing policy issues now are energy, security and climate change, health and climate change. Biodiversity practitioners should capitalise on these opportunities to communicate the importance of biodiversity for these areas (biodiversity as insurance).

Research needs

1. Increase access to taxonomic data and expertise held by UK institutions.
2. There is an urgent need to undertake fundamental research and improve the evidence base for policy making on all aspects of ecosystem services, in UK, Europe and developing countries, in particular: -
 - a forward look at the key drivers of change over the next 50-100 years. In this respect the role and impact of indirect (as well as direct drivers) needs to be assessed, because these are likely to overwhelm the effects of the direct drivers,
 - the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem service provision;
 - the role of ecosystem services, especially with regard to human well-being and poverty alleviation;
 - links between biodiversity, appropriation (or property) regimes and poverty;
 - development of tools to assess values of biodiversity and ecosystem services, particularly of non-market goods and services;
 - definition of measurable indicators of ecosystem services, appropriate for scales from local to global;
 - further consideration of the global impacts of UK activity and consumption.
3. Development and testing of scenarios which demonstrate pathways towards sustainable development, including achievement of a reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss (“biodiversity-centric” scenarios);

4. Testing the scenario models using wider range of biodiversity data. Data from aquatic (freshwater and marine) ecosystems should be a priority;
5. Invite the research community to investigate options for a joint initiative, considering the interaction between natural and social sciences and seek better integration of natural and social science research and funding.

Lessons for future

1. Application of the MA model at the UK (or country) level could help to test the assumptions of the models, to identify key drivers and their relative importance, to identify the dominant pressures and their interactions and including environment and human health, and the footprint of the country.
2. Consolidated evaluation of MA required at global, regional and national levels to inform decisions about future assessments.
3. National government buy-in was seen as a key requirement for making future assessments more useful.
4. Greater alignment with international/regional conventions and national strategies necessary to deliver more relevant outcomes and guidance (e.g. reference to goals, targets and indicators of CBD and WSSD) but recognising that these are moving goal posts.
5. Better use of sub-global/national assessments within a common framework to build up a global picture.
6. Learn from IPCC experience in the development and use of models and scenarios across a range of scales.
7. Facilitate access to 3rd country data.